

## Message Text

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PAGE 01 DUBLIN 00161 221823Z

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FM AMEMBASSY DUBLIN  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7553

S E C R E T DUBLIN 0161

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: PARM, PFOR, MASS, XG, EI  
SUBJECT: DEPARTMENTAL STUDY OF CONVENTIONAL ARMS SUPPLY RESTRAINTS -  
IRELAND

REF: STATE 004313

1. SUMMARY. THE EMBASSY BELIEVES THAT THE IRISH GOVERNMENT WOULD BE THEORETICALLY INTERESTED IN INITIATIVES AIMED AT RESTRAINING CONVENTIONAL ARMS TRANSFERS BUT, AS A PRACTICAL MATTER THEY WOULD BE GUIDED BY THE CONSENSUS OF THEIR PARTNERS IN THE COMMON MARKET. THE IRISH ARE VERY AWARE OF THE FACT THAT THEY ARE THE ONLY MEMBERS OF THE COMMON MARKET WHO ARE NOT MEMBERS OF NATO AND THUS ANY INITIATIVE INVOLVING OUR ALLIES QUA ALLIES PROBABLY WOULD NOT BE WELCOMED BY NEUTRAL IRELAND. END SUMMARY.

2. IMPORTANCE OF ARMS INDUSTRY: IRELAND HAS NO ARMS INDUSTRY. ASIDE FROM AN EXPLOSIVES FACTORY, THE IRISH ARE PREPARING TO PRODUCE THEIR OWN ARMORED CAR. THE VEROLME SHIPYARD IN CORK HARBOR COULD, WITH ADDED EXPERTISE, CONSTRUCT SHIPS UP TO THE HEAVY CRUISER CLASS. IMPORTS FOR THE 13,500-MAN IRISH DEFENSE FORCE COME EXCLUSIVELY FROM BRITAIN, FRANCE, BELGIUM, SWEDEN AND ITALY, WITH A VERY SMALL AMOUNT OF SUPPORT EQUIPMENT PURCHASED IN THE UNITED STATES.

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PAGE 02 DUBLIN 00161 221823Z

3. EUROPEAN ARMS TRANSFERS TO THIRD WORLD: THE IRISH

HAVE TAKEN A GREATLY INCREASED INTEREST IN THE "THIRD WORLD" SINCE THEY JOINED THE EUROPEAN COMMON MARKET SEVERAL YEARS AGO. THEY HAVE, AS YET, TO OUR KNOWLEDGE, MADE NO MILITARY SALES. THERE HAVE BEEN ISOLATED EXAMPLES OF THE GOI DECRYING MASSIVE ARMS SALES TO THIRD WORLD COUNTRIES BUT AS A PRACTICAL MATTER THEY KNOW THEY ARE WITHOUT SIGNIFICANT INFLUENCE.

4. PUBLIC AND OFFICIAL ATTITUDES: AS THE DEPARTMENT IS AWARE, BOTH THE IRISH GOVERNMENT AND PUBLIC ARE ACUTELY CONSCIOUS OF THE FACT THAT IRELAND IS THE ONLY NEUTRAL COUNTRY MEMBER OF THE COMMON MARKET. THIS STATUS OF NOT BEING INVOLVED IN BIG-POWER MILITARY ALLIANCES HAS OCCASIONALLY BEEN HELPFUL TO THEM IN DEALINGS WITH THE THIRD WORLD: VIZ IRISH LEADERSHIP IN MAKING EXTERNAL AGREEMENTS WITH COUNTRIES OF THE THIRD WORLD SUCH AS THE LOME CONVENTION. WITHIN THE COMMON MARKET CONTEXT WHEN SECURITY MATTERS ARISE THE IRISH EITHER DO NOT TAKE PART IN THE DISCUSSION, OR SUGGEST THAT IT SHOULD BE RAISED ELSEWHERE, FOR EXAMPLE, WITHIN NATO.

5. THERE HAVE BEEN SEVERAL EXAMPLES OF EXCEPTIONS. IRELAND HAS PLAYED AN ACTIVE ROLE IN CSCE. IN ADDITION FOREIGN MINISTER FITZGERALD MADE A GINGERLY STATEMENT IN 1975 TO THE EFFCT THAT THE GROWTH OF POLITICAL AND ECONLVIC COOPERATION IN THE COMMON MARKET MIGHT AT SOME TIME IN THE FUTURE PROVIDE A NEED FOR COMMON MARKET SECURITY COOPERATION TO DEFEND THESE INSTITUTIONS.

6. IRELAND HAS A HISTORICAL TRADITION OF TAKING AN ACTIVE PART IN "PEACE" EFFORTS, PARTICULARLY THROUGH THE UN, ICRC, ETC. IT HAS PARTICIPATED IN MOST OF THE UN PEACEKEEPING EFFORTS. FOREIGN MINISTER FITZGERALD ALSO SEES HIMSELF AS BEING VERY LIBERAL IN THIS SPHERE. THUS, TO ASSESS WHETHER IRELAND WOULD TAKE PART IN ANY INITIATIVE ON CONVENTIONAL ARMS TRANSFERS WOULD DEPEND UPON THE TYPE OF INITIATIVE, THE SOURCE OF THE INITIATIVE, AND PARTICULARLY HOW THE INITIATIVE WOULD INTERACT WITH THE EC NINE. ON THE WHOLE WE WOULD EXPECT THE IRISH TO APPLAUD THE IDEALS OF SUCH AN EFFORT BUT THEY WOULD BE UNLIKELY TO BE "OUT FRONT."

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 03 DUBLIN 00161 221823Z

7. IRA WEAPONS SMUGGLING: WHILE PRESUMABLY OUTSIDE THE SCOPE OF REFTTEL, THE DEPARTMENT SHOULD TAKE ACCOUNT OF THE TROUBLES IN NORTHERN IRELAND. SINCE 1969 THE RAPID BUILD-UP OF SMUGGLED ARMS IN THE HANDS OF THE IRISH REPUBLICAN ARMY AND PROTESTANT PARA-MILITARY GROUPS HAS BEEN PART OF IRELAND'S GREATEST FOREIGN POLICY PROBLEM. TO THE EXTENT THAT CONVENTIONAL ARMS SUPPLY RESTRAINTS WOULD HELP

CONTROL THE ILLEGAL FLOW OF  
WEAPONS AND AMMUNITION TO AND THROUGH IRELAND, THE GOI COULD  
BE EXPECTED TO BE MOST INTERESTED.  
CURLEY

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